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Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
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R 181757Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3443
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
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SUBJECT: THIS WEEK IN VENEZUELA

REF: CARACAS 7508

SUMMARY: THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: A SLOW WEEK ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL. INTERIOR MINISTER LEPAGE ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION. FONMIN CONSALVI HEADS GOV DELEGATION TO GUZMAN PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION. AIRPORT 78 - MARINES REQUIRED TO PREVENT DAMAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN: A SLOW WEEK ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL.

THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN GROUND ON THIS WEEK, BUT WITH ATTENTION AND ACTIVITY DIVERTED TO THE SELECTION OF CONGRESSIONAL CANDIDATES AND EFFORTS TO PUSH THROUGH A DECISION FOR SEPARATE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS. MOST CAMPAIGN ENERGIES WERE TEMPORARILY DIVERTED TO INTERNAL DEBATES
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AND SQUABBLES AS THE PARTIES STRUGGLED TO SELECT THEIR NOMINEES FOR THE CONGRESSIONAL, STATE LEGISLATURE AND MUNICIPAL POSITIONS COMING UP FOR GRABS THIS DECEMBER. DURING THE WEEK, THE AD CANDIDATE ALSO SUDDENLY RENEWED HIS CALL FOR SEPARATE MUNICIPAL AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS, AS DID PRESIDENT CARLOS ANDRES PEREZ BEFORE PREPARING TO SIGN THE MUNICIPAL REFORM BILL INTO LAW ON AUGUST 18.

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BENDING UNDER THE INCREASED PRESSURE FROM THE AD PARTY, SUPREME ELECTORAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN, DELGADO CHAPELLIN, ANNOUNCED THAT A THREE-MEMBER COMMISSION HAD BEEN FORMED TO EVALUATE THE CSE'S ABILITY TO SEPARATE AND CONDUCT A SECOND SERIES OF MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS AT SOME DATE AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS.

2. INTERIOR MINISTER LEPAGE ANNOUNCES RESIGNATION.
INTERIOR MINISTER OCTAVIO LEPAGE THIS WEEK CONFIRMED HIS DEPARTURE FROM THE GOVERNMENT TO JOIN THE CAMPAIGN OF AD CANDIDATE, LUIS PINERUA ORDAZ. THE AD ORGANIZATION SECRETARY, LUIS ALFARO, ALSO CONFIRMED THAT LEPAGE WILL HEAD THE AD SLATE FROM MIRANDA STATE IN THE UPCOMING DECEMBER ELECTIONS.

3. FONMIN CONSALVI HEADS GOV DELEGATION TO GUZMAN PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION.

FOREIGN MINISTER SIMON ALBERTO CONSALVI HEADED AN OFFICIAL GOV DELEGATION TO THE DOMINCAN REPUBLIC ON AUGUST 16 TO ATTEND THE INAUGURATION OF PRESIDENT ANTONIO GUZMAN. ACCION DEMOCRATICA (AD) SECRETARY GENERAL, ALEJANDRO IZAGUIRRE ALSO ATTENDED WITH SEVERAL OTHER AD PARTY LEADERS.
COMMENT: VENEZUELA WAS PARTICULARLY WELL REPRESENTED, IN PART A REFLECTION OF PRESIDENT PEREZ' INTEREST AND ROLE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S RECENT ELECTION, AND ALSO BECAUSE
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THE VENEZUELAN AD PARTY HAS TRADITIONALLY MAINTAINED STRONG TIES WITH THE DR'S PARTIDO REVOLCIONARIO DOMINICANO.
END COMMENT.

3. AIRPORT 78 - THE MARINES BACK IN ACTION IN THE CARIBBEAN.

MAIQUETIA, VENEZUELA'S MAJOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT AND LOCATED ON THE CARIBBEAN SHORE, HAS BEEN INADEQUATE FOR YEARS. A NEW INTERNATIONAL AIR TERMINAL, WHOSE DESIGN WON A PRIZE IN NEW YORK, EQUIPPED WITH THE LATEST IN PEOPLE-MOVING FACILITIES AND COMFORTS WAS TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE SHOWCASES OF PRESIDENT PEREZ' TERM IN OFFICE. BUT THE OPENING KEPT BEING POSTPONED BECAUSE CONSTRUCTION SEEMED TO PROCEED AT A GLACIAL PACE AND UEXPECTED PROBLEMS EMERGED (E.G. THE WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM IN THE MAIQUETIA AREA IS NOT ADEQUATE TO SUPPLY THE NEW TERMINAL'S AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM SO WATER WILL HAVE TO BE BROUGHT IN BE SEA BARGE UNTIL THE WATER SUPPLY SYSTEM IS ENLARGED). RATHER THAN LET THE DELAY IN OPENING THE NEW TERMINAL BECOME A CAMPAIGN ISSUE, THE GOV ORDERED IT PUT INTO OPERATION STILL ONLY PARTIALLY COMPLETED IN ORDER TO HELP

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COPE WITH THE VENEZUELAN AUGUST VACTION RUSH PERIOD IN
AIR TRAVEL. ITS FIRST USER WAS PRESIDENT PEREZ HIMSELF
WHEN HE RETURNED AUGUST 8 FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL INAUGURATION
IN COLOMBIA. SINCE THEN THE NEW FACILITY HAS BEEN GOING
FULL BLAST AS WORKMEN STRUGGLE TO COMPLETE INSTALLING
PLUMBING, ELECTRICAL WIRING, AIR CONDITIONING, FURNITURE,
ORNAMENTS AND, ABOVE ALL SIGNS. THE RESULTS FOR PASSENGERS
HAVE BEEN MIXED - DURING SLOW PERIODS THINGS HAVE GONE WELL,
AT RUSH PERIODS THERE HAS BEEN CHAOS, HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE
AND MISSED FLIGHTS. TO THE GOV'S ALARM, HOWEVER, THE PUBLIC
HAS ALREADY CAUSED STAGGERING DAMAGE TO THE NEW FACILITY -
ELECTRIC DOORS AND ESCALATORS ARE BROKEN AND, BECAUSE OF A
LACK OF CHAIRS, PEOPLE HAVE DESTROYED MANY OF THE ORNAMENTAL
PLANTS AND EVEN THE BAGGAGE WEIGHING SCALES BY SITTING ON
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THEM. THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT EXHORTED HIS FELLOW
CITIZENS TO SHOW CIVIC SPIRIT; THE NEWSPAPERS WROTE EDITORIALS
CRITICIZING VENEZUELAN DESTRUCTIVNESS, AND PRESIDENT
PEREZ THIS WEEK ORDERED THE VENEZUELAN MARINES TO PATROL
THE HALLS OF MAIQUETIA.

4. OTHER REPORTING THIS WEEK INCLUDED: MAJOR PROJECT:
PLANT TO CONVERT FOOD WASTES TO PIG FEED (CARACAS 7673),
MAJOR PORJECT: CORPUZULIA COAL AND STEEL (CARACAS 7401),
US SHARE OF THE MARKET (CERP 1205) (CARACAS A-96, MAJOR
PROJECT: RAILROAD AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORT SYSTEM (CARACAS
7440), AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY - GOV (CARACAS 7571), COPEI
CANDIDATE PROPOSES RESTRUCTION OF ROLES OF PETROLEOS AND
MINISTRY OF MINES AND ENERGY AND RENEGOTIATION OF OIL TECHNOLOGY
CONTRACTS (CARACAS 7532), CLARIFICATION OF COPEI'S STAND
CONCERNING PRIVATE PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF
ORINOCO OIL BELT (CARACAS 7589), AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY - GOV
(CARACAS 7528), SELA ACTIVITIES (CARACAS 7512), M/V RIO
CHICO (CARACAS 7579), AND VISITING ISRAELI HISTADRUT
OFFICIAL MESHEL IS GIVEN HIGH LEVEL VENEZUELAN ATTENTION
(CARACAS 7720.
CROWLEY

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